



Massachusetts Parole Board News

Massachusetts Parole Board
Executive Office of Public Safety



October, 2006

The first legislation in the United States authorizing parole was enacted in Massachusetts in 1837. The duties of the first parole officers included helping prisoners find jobs and providing them with tools, clothing, and transportation at state expense. Although in the past 175 years there have been numerous legislative changes affecting parole in Massachusetts, our core mission and objective remain essentially the same.

Today, the Massachusetts Parole Board is an agency within the Executive Office of Public Safety. We have the primary responsibility of identifying those parole eligible offenders for whom there is sufficient indication that confinement has served its purpose, setting appropriate conditions for parole, and enhancing public safety through the responsible reintegration of these individuals into the community.

Parole's Housing Program: A Track Record of Success

The Massachusetts Parole Board's Transitional Housing Program [THP], formerly known as VOI/TIS, has provided temporary housing and support services to a total of 282 parolees and ex-offenders since it began in June, 2005, according to Parole Board statistics.* The program, part of the agency's Regional Reentry Center Initiative, serves both parolees and ex-offenders who have finished their sentences and been released to the community through one of the agency's eight Regional Reentry Cen-

ters.

Under THP, seven housing agencies are paid by Parole to provide beds to parolees

program prevents homelessness and provides offenders with substance abuse counseling and job skills training, both factors in reducing new crimes.

Low recidivism rates among participants suggests that the strategy is working.

*Statistics were updated on June 16, 2006. THP was until October, 2006 known as the Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing [VOI/TIS] housing program, reflecting the name of the Department of Justice grant

Recidivism:

- 71 percent have remained arrest-free

Substance Abuse Treatment:

- 39,976.5 hours spent in substance abuse counseling, including Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

Housing:

- 52 percent obtained sustainable housing— an apartment, house, condominium, or transitional housing program— upon leaving THP.

Employment:

- 44 percent employment rate at discharge among participants.

Julian's Story. A Voice from Parole's Transitional Housing Program

A lot of bad things can be said about Julian Daniels, a 51-year-old ex-convict who was initiated into criminal life at the shockingly young age of 12.

But after his last robbery—an impromptu stickup at a McDonald's in Cambridge that landed him a 16-year sentence in state prison—no one else's words compare with his own scathing self-assessment.

Mr. Daniel's committed his first armed robbery with a

group of 18-20 year-old kids from his home neighborhood of Roxbury. After a co-conspirator spent all of the stolen money on drugs, Mr. Daniels learned to stick the heroin in his own arm to get his share of the loot. Still shy of his thirteenth birthday, Mr. Daniels descended into a world of drugs, guns, and more robberies.

He blames only himself for the downward spiral, having grown up in a six-sibling household with a father he

describes as "an excellent role model," and a mother who, despite being an alcoholic, still took care of the family.

But while his father went to work everyday, Mr. Daniels chose instead to steal and rob on the streets with a group of older kids, developing a taste for the flashy lifestyle of the hustlers and pimps he saw around the neighborhood. His interest in science and precocity as a student was [continued on page 3]

Chairman's Column

By Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh

I am pleased to announce that Parole Board Member Candace Kochin was recently re-appointed to the Parole Board and also that Ms. Pamela Lombardini was appointed as a Parole Board Member by the members of the Governor's Council.

Most of you are very familiar with the background and experience of Candace Kochin. She has worked in several different arenas in the criminal justice field, including the Victim Services Unit, as a probation officer in the Superior Court in Northhampton, Massachusetts, and most recently as the Deputy Superintendent of Treatment at the Hampshire County House of Correction. All of these experiences have assisted Candace in her daily functions as a Parole Board Member.

In addition to the number of cases that she has voted [our last count was well over 5,000 in the past two and one-half years] Candace has also been instrumental in many of the policy changes at the Parole Board. She volunteered as was instrumental to the selection of a vendor for the Risk Assessment tool that is currently in progress with the Department of Correction and the Massa-

chusetts Parole Board.

She also has been invaluable when it comes to revising and updating our Decision Making Guidelines. Again, her past experience and commonsense approach to reentry challenges has been second to none. I am grateful for her re-appointment, as she has been a team player and she fully understands the important role of parole in public safety.

I am also happy to introduce Pamela Lombardini as a Parole Board Member. Pam, who hails from the North Shore, [revisouly worked for the state probation department and then spent a considerable amount of time as a probation officer for the federal system. I attended Ms. Lombarini's hearing before the Governor's Council and heard about her past experience as a probation officer and her views about reentry and the need for supervised release. She has direct experience with offenders, having supervised them in the community as well as having made recommendations to the judge to return them to custody if necessary. In addition to her professional work and accomplishments, Pamela also has an interesting history, having first started her career upon graduation from college



at McLean Hospital, where she was involved with patients with severe mental health issues. Pamela has also volunteered in her community and is on a local planning committee and has given her time with projects such as Habitat for Humanity.

Please join me in congratulating both of these women! Having a seventh Board Member is instrumental in many ways, including alleviating the issue of split votes in our state and lifer cases, as well as freeing up the Board Members in order to contribute more to policy decisions. We welcome both Parole Board members. I am sure Candace will continue to be a contributing member to the agency's overall success, and that Pam will become such a member. Please join me in welcoming her to the agency!

"Please join me in congratulating both of these women!"

-Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh on the re-appointment of Parole Board member Candace Kochin, and the appointment of new Parole Board member Pamela Lombardini

Parole Board Unveils New System for Handling Parole Violations

Assisting parole officers in balancing the support and supervisions of offenders mandated by Massachusetts state law, the Massachusetts Parole Board will soon roll out a comprehensive guide to meting out punishment for violations of parole conditions.

All offenders released on parole must adhere to a standard list of conditions tailored to criminal record and deficiencies to avoid parole revocation. While violating any condition of parole requires punishment of some type, not all violations warrant being sent back to jail.

There is potential for numerous violations of varying degree, and there is also variation in parole officer response to violations.

The new graduated sanctions policy will limit this variation by providing parole officers with a grid of offenses ranked according to their severity, matched with [continued on pg. 4]

One Man's Story: Parolee Changes Life With Aid of Housing Program

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overshadowed by a restless nature and the desire to be out on the streets. While he showed enough academic promise to skip several grades in middle school, behavioral problems in early high school landed him at a disciplinary school in Brookline. There, he encountered older boys with more criminal experience and "learned from everyone around him." Together they would "steal and rob all the way to school," he said.

After showing modest improvement, he was sent back to the mainstream city high school when he was about 16 years old. His time there was short. In three days, he was kicked out for beating up a teacher with some other students.

From then on, Mr. Daniels was immersed in street life. "Hustling, stickups, and prison became my job," he said. It finally came to an end when, at age 35, during a streak of robberies with a fellow drug addict, he was arrested after an early morning holdup at McDonald's in Central Square.

Faced with a sentence that amounted to nearly half his lifetime, Mr. Daniels felt he had no other choice but to own up to his crimes. He admitted guilt and refused a trial, preparing to spend the next 16 years behind bars. "I became a man at 35 years old. I took responsibility," he said of his latest prison term, which amounted to five

years at MCI-Norfolk, eight years at the medium-security Bay State Correctional Center, and two years at the Northeastern Correctional Center, a minimum security/pre-release facility in Concord.



Julian Daniels, on parole until 2012, poses for a picture at St. Francis House in Boston, the transitional shelter where he received job skills training and counseling after getting out of prison. Mr. Daniels' time at St. Francis House was made possible through the Massachusetts Parole Board's Transitional Housing Program.

When he arrived at Norfolk, he was provoked by correction officers who welcomed him by saying they took bets on when he'd be back in jail. But he soon realized that the mocking commentary was his own fault, and that he alone had the power to change their perceptions. "I wanted them to respect me as a man. I wanted them to be shaking my hand when I left," he said.

Mr. Daniels achieved that respectability, but not without personal struggle and backsliding. It wasn't until two years

into his sentence that he became clean and sober. "I felt sorry for myself, but then I realized that I [had to change] if I was going to live at all," he said. Kicking the drugs helped to clear the path to transformation, the next step was to con-

While incarcerated, Mr. Daniels asked his wife at the time to bring Eric in to see him every week. All of this had an impact on Eric, who grew up in the Roxbury projects and said the visits "show him the outcome of bad choices." Talking to Mr. Daniels helped him to "stay on the focus side," even when he didn't always make the right decisions himself, he said.

During the eight years at Bay State Correctional Center, Mr. Daniels was a member of the group Prison Voices, which gave talks to high school students from around Massachusetts.

After being released on parole in March of this year, Mr. Daniels continued speaking at high schools, naming his program "One Man's Story." He works nights at Home Depot, leaving the afternoons open for speaking engagements. He wants to go back to school to get a degree in counseling and work for a program like the Moving Ahead Program

[MAP] at St. Francis House in Boston, a life skills and employment readiness program where Mr. Daniels spent his first four months on parole. Mr. Daniels' participation in the MAP program, in which he received his GED, job skills training, and substance abuse counseling, was funded through the Massachusetts Parole Board's Transitional Housing Program. The program provides temporary housing, counseling, and community support to as many as 70 parolees at a time through contracted social service agencies.

front his criminal past. "I faced it. I talked about it. I cried about it," he said.

While Mr. Daniels talked to friends, family, and counselors, he also started talking to teenagers, laying out his past mistakes, shame, and pain.

His aim was to tarnish the alluring image of criminal life that seduced him as a young man. In particular, he made an enormous effort to shepherd the development of his godson, Eric, now a businessman, husband, and father in his early thirties.

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The Massachusetts Parole Board's **Regional Reentry Center [RRC] Initiative** enters its second year this month.

The initiative, begun in October 2004, is designed to reduce recidivism among ex-offenders and parolees coming out of Massachusetts prisons and jails by increasing supervision and support services.

As of May, 2006, 1,243 ex-offenders and parolees have been served at one of the agency's eight RRC's. More than half of these offenders requested some form of assistance from RRC staff.

RRC staff made 299 referrals to job training and placement programs and 131 referrals to substance abuse treatment counseling or programs.

Of those 1,243 offenders, only 6 percent have been re-incarcerated for a new crime, as of May, 2006.



Parole Board Unveils New System for Handling Parole Violations

[continued from page 2] the offender's assessed risk. The grid will in turn produce a list of sanctions and interventions deemed appropriate. The agency's eight parole offices in Quincy, Mattapan, Worcester, Springfield, Lawrence, Brockton, New Bedford, and Framingham have been conducting pilot initiatives to test the new system. In addition to the grid of appropriate sanctions, the mode of assessing the offender's risk has been made more exacting through the use of a risk assessment tool developed by the Crime and Justice Institute. The tool determines the offender's risk as low, medium or high according to biographical information such as age and sex, and four questions: age of first arrest, number of prior adult arrests, criminal history of violence, and current supervision level. At the New Bedford Parole Office, the pilot program

began in March and has been met with positive results: most of the officers find the grid to be a helpful tool. Parole Officer Brian McGaffigan said that he has basically internalized the grid. After he knows the risk level of a particular parolee, he already knows the range of sanctions to choose from if the parolee commits a particular infraction. This kind of fluency with the system is necessary because most of the time the parole officer determines the necessary sanction or intervention in the field not in the office. The infraction must be addressed during the parole officer's encounter with the parolee, he said. "I need to come up with a plan of action. If they're dirty for coke or heroin, I have to deal with it immediately," he said. The content of the grid isn't entirely foreign to parole officers either. "For a long time everyone has been

doing it, either formally or informally," he said. The purpose of the new graduated sanctions policy is to formalize the method for punishing parole violations and assisting parolees who need help with a substance abuse issue or another problem. The grid system also includes possible interventions for the parole officer to choose from, such as requiring the parolee to get treatment or attend counseling. The parole officer retains some degree of discretion: if the sanction or intervention believed to be appropriate is not listed, he or she can request an override which must be approved by a supervisor and a Member of the Parole Board. In addition to PO McGaffigan, PO David Miller also participated in the pilot program, along with Richard Ryan, supervisor of the New Bedford office who played a key role in designing the system.

A training for the rest of the officers was held in late October, the final installment in a series of trainings at the eight regional parole offices. The training was conducted by Deputy Chief George Valentgas and Policy and Training Coordinator Paul Gallagher. During the training, Deputy Chief Valentgas commented on the benefits of the strategy of incremental supervision afforded by the new policy. "Incremental supervision steps allow the parole officer to be more proactive rather than reactive....Now we don't let them have a free fall. We can monitor and adjust supervision as deemed necessary."